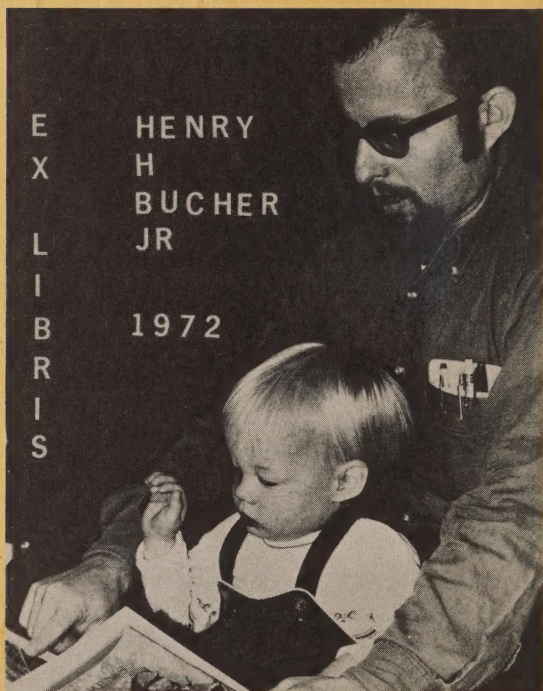
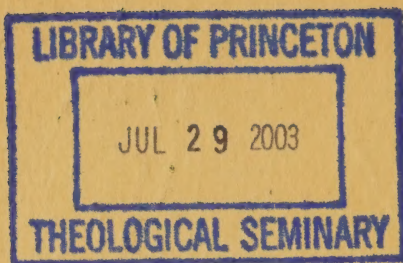


HUNTING PYGMY HUNTERS



by Don
Fairley

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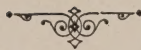
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GABON

Hunting
Pygmy Hunters

by

DONALD A. FAIRLEY



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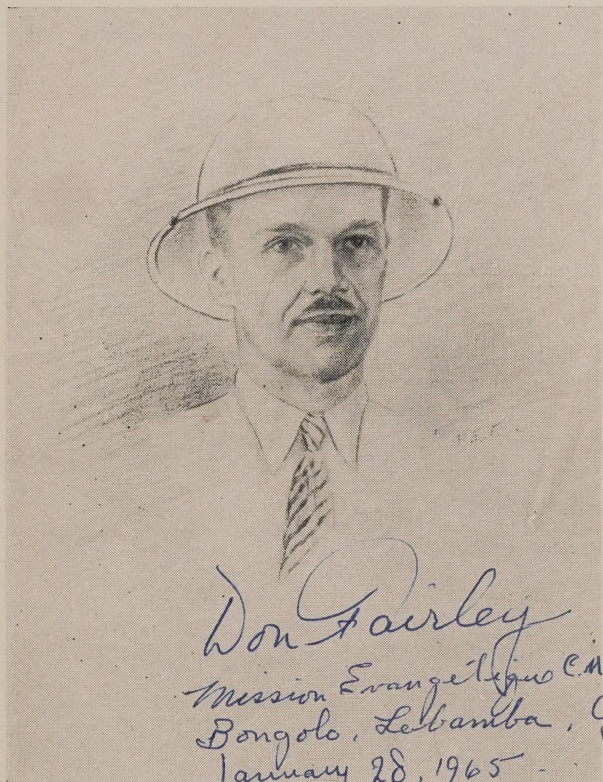
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To Henry Bucher, Jr.

Libreville, Gabon

Your keen interest in preserving and perpetuating records of Gabon's early years is much appreciated. These form a composite story of missionaries, traders and government, active amongst admirable peoples; a weaving of both spiritual and material objectives in view.

Please accept this booklet, a partial account of Gospel beginnings in the midst of some of Gabon's most primitive people.



Rev. Donald A. Fairley, Missionary of the
Christian and Missionary Alliance since 1929

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Dedication



Depinga Daniel—Dedication

To Depinga Daniel, my tiny Pygmy convert and brother in Christ Jesus who, through the years, has been a true friend and key man in reaching his people with the Gospel, this book is affectionately dedicated.

Acknowledgement

The cover, map, and pen sketches are the work of Rev. Paul E. Freligh, former missionary to Africa, whose encouragement and cooperation in the preparation of this booklet are gratefully acknowledged.

The photographs were all made by the author. Front cover pictures Pygmies hunting with poisoned arrows; back cover, discarded fetish dancing mask.



CHAPTER I

The Forest Shadow Dwellers Found

While seated late one sultry afternoon in a native village high in the forested, fern-covered mountains of south Gabon on the West Coast of French Equatorial Africa, we received definite word of the presence of neighboring Pygmies. My companion and I had come, on a survey trip from Belgian Congo, to study at first hand this little known equatorial jungle, in anticipation of pioneering a Gospel mission here. Several primitive tribes had been encountered already on our safari, but the little people who shun the sunlit villages, preferring to make their home in the forest's deep shade, had not yet been discovered. The region through which we were passing was similar to that of the well known Pygmyland of the distant Upper Congo, yet the presence of tribes of the earth's smallest inhabitants was only suspected.

Standing by us, in the crowd of semi-naked on-lookers, was an elderly chief with his personal attendant and body guard. This kindly-faced man was telling us that he was the royal head of all the surrounding country. His name, he said, was "Kumiki." He and his chief men lived well in their land, which abounded in wild game, being criss-crossed by the trails of antelopes, wild pigs, buffaloes, elephants, the large apes, chimpanzees and gorillas, and monkeys of all kinds. These and many kinds of snakes and

tropical birds roasted, they enjoyed for food. Yes, his people, he told us, were good hunters, but, of



Chief Kumiki and his attendant

course, the Babongo — sometimes known as the Barimba—were the real hunters in the great forest. They had preceded all the other tribes in arriving in the unbroken jungle. Living close to the wild animals, they followed them near and far to kill them for food in their strong nets, or with hand-thrown spears, or with poisoned arrows shot from small bows. Babongo! The name of the Pygmies was like a

magic word presenting a picture, not yet clear, of strange, diminutive people, little known or understood by the white man.

Kumiki gave us gifts of young chickens and ripe bananas, and inquired regarding our purpose in visiting his region. Through our interpreter we told him of the Good News of God's love and of His plan of salvation for all men. He was much attracted to us, for we seemed to be "different" white men, not seeking taxes or rubber or forcing thousands of his young men to go far away to labor for years and to die in logging camps, on the iron paths (railroads) or in the damp mines. He asked us to return to him and his people and teach them about our God! When we parted, we gave him the customary gift of some salt and a hunting knife in return for the gifts he had given to us.

In order to make contact with the notoriously shy Pygmies of whom we had just heard, we asked him to send one of his runners ahead of our caravan to present them with our gifts and greetings. Strings of bright beads and a quantity of rock salt were soon on their way to the little men and women who, he informed us, were not far from our planned path of travel. Assuring him



The Babongo were real hunters

of our intention to return to his land the second dry season to follow, we made camp in great anticipation of the morrow's peep at Pygmyland.

Within an hour after breaking camp at dawn, we crossed a two-hundred-foot suspension bridge, skillfully constructed of vines, and found ourselves in the deep forest. The heavy warm dampness and the dripping leaves of the tall trees overhead reminded us of a hot-house tropical garden, such as one sees in some of our large cities. Festooning vines hanging from branches, air plants, mosses and colored lichens almost covered the bark of the huge trees. From a great height, flowering begonia and several varieties of the orchid family were displaying their dainty blooms as they descended to the ground where they were set off by banks of ferns, some tall, like trees. Birds of brilliant plumage and chattering bands of monkeys were startled into flight at our approach. Our path often led like a tunnel through this dense growth. At a turn in the road ahead we met our run-

ner, sent earlier to try to arrange a meeting with the Babongo. He was our friend, Kumiki's attendant of the evening before, and his broad, white filed-tooth smile gave us assurance of his success.

Jumping down from our native-carried bamboo chairs, we followed him on a narrow side path, with our camera and gifts in hand. In a few moments we saw our first Pygmies. Two little men and a youth, with short muscular bodies, unusually long arms and hands, broad noses and receding foreheads, stood along the trail just ahead of us. Their bright eyes shifted rapidly like those of startled deer, and they were wearing our gift beads about their necks. From some of the salt held in their hands, they took repeated licks, smiled and talked to show their acceptance of our advance token of friendship. My heart immediately went out to them in



Our heart's desire was to win
them to Christ

love and a desire to win them to Christ, our Lord. Turning up the path, they beckoned us to follow. Before us lay their village, made up of a number of half-size bark houses and set in a small clearing which was closely pressed by the dark forest encircling it.

No one else was in sight, so we peered into the nearest hut. It was dark inside, except for the light from the narrow door through which we entered, having to double over. There were two very small rooms, perhaps five by five feet, and the ridge pole of the roof was about six feet above the ground. In the center of the dirt floor, in what seemed to be the "living room," a fire smouldered. A short pole, split in half with the flat side down, served as a seat and place to recline. In a corner a twenty pound coil of bark fiber hunting net hung, and in another there was a well sharpened spear, together with a bow and quiver of poisoned arrows. A hollow, four foot length of large sized bamboo contained water, but there were no cooking pots or other utensils there or in the other houses. The "bedroom" furnishings were three, four-and-one-half foot beds, made of split poles, round sides up, placed side by side on the earth. Ashes in the center showed where fires burned all night for warmth and protection from mosquitoes. Nothing else could be seen except a number of dried animal skins hanging from the walls. There apparently were no fetish altars or visible charms, as in the "big people's" dwellings.

We began to hear the sound of voices coming from different directions outside. As we came forth into the sunlight, Pygmies were emerging from the green vegetation on all sides. A signal designating the safety of an appearance probably had been given. The first little men were joined by others, and a number of women and children followed closely behind. They gave us the impression that it would take but a very small misstep on our part to send them flying back into the cover of the thick leaves. We were intentionally without our interpreter, but by smiling a great

deal and showing a lively interest in their hunting implements, we were able to move slowly among them and talk to them softly in Kikongo, although it was not understood by them. Prayer was breathed to the Saviour that they would be put at ease and an opening be made in their hearts for a future return to them with the Gospel.



**Tattooed Pygmy hunter
suspicious of camera**

An elderly gray-haired man, about four and a half feet tall, gave us two eggs. By his gesture of striking his chest with an open hand, we understood that he was a chief. In turn, we gave him a nice hunting knife in a sheath and a modest additional quantity of rock salt. He and his people were visibly pleased. Hoping to impress them with the fact that we were messengers of God, we repeated their name for Him,

"Nzembi," a number of times. Then, as all were helping themselves to the salt, just as we do with candy, crunching with delight the coarse crystals between their glistening teeth, some began to laugh and talk loudly and skip around. I saw that it was now time to take some snapshots, which I accomplished without much difficulty. The little black camera and my use of it seemed to be accepted as a matter of course, though somewhat suspiciously—just another inexplicable custom of the white man. Then, as we turned to go, the entire band followed us a short dis-

tance in close formation, chanting a rhythmic song with throaty fervor.

Early that evening we camped twenty miles further on our way, in the village of the influential chief, Mapula. One can imagine our surprise when, as we were seated outside his guest hut, our little chief of the morning visit to Pygmyland, accompanied by other men, appeared from the forest close by. Without hesitation a freshly killed gazelle was placed at my feet and then he took my hands in an odd way. His right hand grasped the thumb of my right hand, his left hand that of my left hand and, swaying back and forth, he gave their tribal greeting. As I was wearing a beard, the Pygmies had judged me to be the elder one of us and thus I was addressed. Still holding tightly, the little man spoke earnestly to me while, intermittently, his companions chimed in with their resounding approval of what he was saying. A newly carved stone pipe with a fetish image on it was then presented to me.

The big chief, Mapula, speaking very broken French, interpreted for him. These Babongo were his subjects, he said. They had chosen me to be their "ketsi" to reveal to them "mambu ma Nzembi," the matters of God. Explaining, as we failed to understand, he said that "ketsi" meant the "tribal



Territorial Chief, Mapula

ruler over family affairs." This, our own interpreter corroborated. The animal, lying at our feet, had been killed and brought to place between us as a means to bring about this relationship. The stone pipe given us was a friendship gift made in response to our morning call. "The white friends must return and live near us," they all said. Mapula offered a nice piece of land for our "village," hoping to persuade us to come back there too. And so it proved to be that, upon our return to their land two years later, the Pygmies were found awaiting the return of their white "ketsi" and friends to hear more about "Nzembi."

Darkness had fallen when another delegation of Pygmies came with brightly burning pitch torches. They lived, they said, in the direction in which our path led, and, presenting us with wild honey wrapped in large green leaves, and with some dried antelope meat, they invited us to visit them also. In the morn-



They had chosen me to be their Ketsi

ing we spent a little while with all of them, getting better acquainted and taking more pictures. Some of the men were quite hairy on chest and body and several wore full beards. The women, on the other hand, had smooth, satiny skins. All were quite light in color, being a not displeasing coppery red. The skin of the ordinary, or larger, negroes was, as a rule, very black in comparison. Some faces were deeply marked from smallpox, and frequently body scars were visible from wounds incurred in the hunt. A tatooed face or body was rare among them, as also were filed teeth. Quite a few of the women had large holes in the lobes of their ears, and their hair, which appeared to be naturally short, showed some few signs of braiding. The men and boys gave much more thought to their hair dress, revealing the frequent use of native-made razors for cutting and shaving. Bright red strings of beads were worn by



Pygmy women's hair appeared to be naturally short

both sexes, and the loin cloths were of the usual woven palm leaf raffia.

One weaver with his loom was seen at work, but otherwise, hunting paraphernalia, unfriendly dogs, meat drying racks, continually smoking fires, bamboo water containers, and rude beds were the only objects in the huts. Irregular snacks and the daily evening meal were roasted in leaves on hot coals found in the center of a fire made by burning three logs placed on the ground in star shape. The touching ends charred slowly and were pushed closer together from time to time as the fire burned them away.

Their machettes, or bush knives, were generally much worn, appearing to be hand-me-downs from the "big" villagers. These were used for every purpose for which a tool was needed—for hunting, and for the skinning and preparation of meat, as well as for shelter building, for cutting firewood, for clearing camp grounds of vegetation and litter, for the preparation of food from wild plants, nuts and fruits, and for the cutting of fibers, scraped from the bark of saplings, for their hunting nets. The seasonal migration of animals, which is their main source of food supply, causes them to live a nomadic life which is likely responsible for their dislike of farming, as well as for their very limited activity in the usual handicrafts.

Thus, our little friends, we could see, were very dependent upon the "big" people in whose vicinity they happened to be living, for a good portion of their vegetable foods, for their knives and spears, raffia loin cloths, and salt (when obtainable). These, our interpreter informed us, were bartered for in exchange for meat, honey, herbs, etc., which are always in great demand by the other tribespeople.

The majority of Pygmies living in southern Gabon, we learned, were living a nomadic life, free from restraint or slavery. It has since been ascertained that there are at least six scattered Pygmy communities, the people almost identical in appearance, living within the territorial limits of as many Gabonese tribes. Yet, they do not have a language of their own, distinct from the others. Each group speaks a quaint "Pygmy dialect" of the language of their big neighbors and, because of their wide travel and inter-marriage, they are entirely at home with one another and at ease, using a Pygmy "esperanto" among themselves!

However, there are numbers of individual Babongo in slavery to big tribal masters, living in the houses of their owners. Some desire freedom, but many are satisfied with their lot. For instance, a slave Pygmy wife will contact her Pygmy people to acquire meat and other delicacies for her master by the exchange of her "big" husband's goods for it. Or a servant, usually well enough cared for in return for his search for the forest's delicacies, is docile and fearful of leaving. Also, in a census we later made, it was revealed that so many "free" Pygmy girls were taken by coercion and purchase by the big men to be included among their polygamous wives that a decrease in Pygmy population is caused. This regrettable loss in the tribe of little people was found to be outstanding in a vicinity near the mission station where only every fourth man had a wife, as there were too few to go around.

The Pygmies born in slavery of mixed blood were, as a rule, absorbed by the tribe of their fathers. However, a few would occasionally escape, returning to the freedom of the mother's forest home and mixing

some of the blood of the larger tribes with that of the miniature race. This mixture with the larger tribes gave a stimulus to the Pygmies, numbers of whom grew taller and showed a darkening in the pigment of the skin; yet the true Pygmy stock is always very strong and predominates in the features and posture.



Ketsi returns

CHAPTER II

Ketsi Returns

The survey ended, our report to the missionaries and native Christians back in Congoland was of great interest, particularly the story of the numerous savage tribes of southern Gabon, among whom, though least in stature and comparatively few in number, the Babongo stood out with special appeal. The believers in the Congo began to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into the unbroken soil of this new field. The entire project was presented to our Mission Board in New York, who, seeing God's beckoning hand to move in that direction, wholeheartedly accepted the challenge.

This was in 1933-34, when the "depression days" increased the need of a real step of faith in order to be able, financially, to enter upon this pioneer work. A goal was set. A certain sum of money, specially designated for the opening of the work, was to be in the treasury of our Mission in New York by the end of our twelve months' furlough. It was felt that this would indicate God's seal of approval upon the project. This fund was to be "special," in that every effort was to be put forth to obtain new interest and support from churches and individuals outside of those giving regularly to the foreign missionary work of the Society.

Faith was tested in that the greater part of our furlough had passed by in prayerful, active ministry before any substantial part of the special fund had been received by our treasurer. It was a thrilling day of

gratitude to God when, in the Omaha Gospel Tabernacle, Rev. William Christie, treasurer of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, present with us at the 1934 Annual Missionary Convention, announced that the goal had been reached, and that we could now prepare to return to the tribesmen of Gabon to begin Gospel work. The appeal of the timid little men and women of Pygmyland had added much to the creation of wide interest, prayer, and support.

Our flat-bottomed boat, propelled by a powerful outboard motor, had finally overcome the last long stretch to the interior of southern Gabon. Having successfully bucked strong currents and dangerous whirlpools, mounted many rock-pierced rapids, and skirted boisterous waterfalls under the still, blazing, tropical sun, or in lashing, electrical storms, it was a wonderful thrill at last to set foot on the soil of our future home and work. Mrs. Fairley and I with our two children, Bonnie Jean, five years of age, and Gordon, three years, raised our hearts in thanksgiving to God for His goodness in bringing us here, deep into the tropical, jungle country, as the first messengers of the "good news" of Christ. Then we earnestly and dependently dedicated our little family to our part in the entire fulfillment of His plan of salvation for its many peoples.

For several weeks previous to their journey into the interior, Mrs. Fairley and the children had remained, together with Mrs. H. L. Pierson and son, Leroy, "down country" at Lambarene, Gabon. The Rev. H. L. Pierson had come with his family from the Belgian Congo field to lend his experience to this pioneering work. Together the two of us had gone into the interior to decide upon a suitable location for the first mission station, and there we had begun the prelimin-

ary clearing and temporary house building. This work had now been accomplished and the Pierson family was on its way to America for furlough and a later return to Gabon.

Mrs. Fairley and I now entered upon the most challenging years of our lives, demanding an active faith in the sure Word of God, in seeking His wisdom and proficiency in a multitude of duties, and in learning lessons of sacrifice, perseverance and patience. Such would be necessary to create and maintain the thrilling experiences with the Babongo in winning them and in establishing them in the new life in Christ Jesus, the Saviour of all men. "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4:11b.

These little people added much to joys which crowned the daily round of arduous mental and physical labor. The first eighteen months of pioneering in this great tropical forest we would spend alone in the care and companionship of Christ, whose "sent ones" we were indeed happy to be, remembering His Word, "Lo, I am with you alway." His Spirit was our only help. Our company was the wild tribespeople and a very occasional visitor in the person of a French official from a distant government post.

CHAPTER III

The Bamboo Telephone Brings Delegation

A very few days after making our first camp in a dilapidated thatched house adjoining a native village and near the roaring Bongolo falls, two tiny men from the forest appeared at our door with gifts they had brought for us. They were an advance delegation from Pygmyland, come to verify the "bamboo telephone" news of the arrival of the Nzembi (God) people, and to see if indeed their "ketsi" had come back with the Good News that he and his friend had promised to tell them. Their presence, with happy expressive brown eyes and broad smiles, cheered our hearts in the realization that God had been truly at work those days, months before, when on our survey trip the little hunters were moved to make a lasting alliance of friendship with us. Now, we purposed in Christ's love and grace, to do our best in hunting Pygmy hunters for His kingdom and glory. The gifts brought by Depinga and Mbimba, the Babongo men, were meaningful. The chicken



The gifts brought by the Babongo were meaningful

was for us to eat and be satisfied; the mat was to sleep restfully upon; and the peanuts we were to plant for eating later on, insuring our stay in the land! Their visit was very brief, for they were anxious to return with the good report to their friends who were busy hunting wild animals in some deep, distant valley.

Soon, we were engrossed in a score of daily activities: native language study and its reduction to writing; Scripture and hymn translations; Gospel story telling; clearing land and making paths; construction of mud and bark shelters; meeting with the frequent groups of visiting chiefs and people who often came from great distances involving many days' walk, and "gossiping" the Gospel of Love and Salvation to them; keeping up an active correspondence to the homeland in English, and to the government authorities in French; solving problems of living in a land unreached by civilization, without fresh fruits, vegetables, milk or sufficient domestic meat, there being no cattle, due to the presence of the deadly tsetse fly; cooking on open fires and baking bread in a crude oven, dug into the hillside; hunting for meat for ourselves and for the native helpers; hand-sawing hardwood logs into planks to replace the box furniture and beds being eaten by termites. In this busy beehive of a pioneer mission post, our son and daughter found much to interest them. The tribespeople were all great lovers of children, and they frequently brought little gifts especially for them, and were delighted to hear them quickly learning to speak the African tongues.

It was into this new, strange life that the Babongo, slowly at first, dovetailed their abilities and interest. During this time a number of them came into the mission station late one afternoon, bringing gifts of a

bundle of dried antelope meat, a freshly killed gazelle, and a baby monkey for the children. The group of about a hundred workers of the bigger tribespeople was greatly surprised at their boldness—a theretofore unheard-of public appearance—and were inclined to discourage the little men of the forest by jokingly making fun of them, asking if they thought now that



Aided by Pygmy guides, wild game was shot for meat

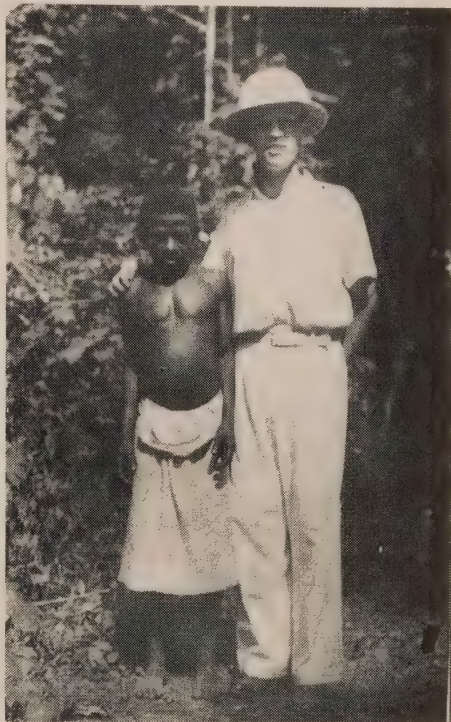
they, too, were men, and not merely wild, soul-less dwellers with the animals! To nip this attitude in the bud we manifested a special interest in them, taking them into our home, showing them how we lived, and calling their attention to the fact that all races of men, however different in outward appearance, are made of one blood, created by one God, and may become His freed children by one Saviour whose name is Jesus. Then, further to assure them that our Mission

was definitely for them also, we called for a good ration of native vegetables and salt to be given to them, while a cooking pot was placed at their disposal. Seeing their tight-lipped uneasiness still gripping them, we learned that they preferred not to sleep in the mission village with the "big" people, but planned to return to the forest for the night. However, when we suggested that they gather wood and make campfires right on our dirt porch, signs of relaxation began to appear. Those of our people who were giving ear to the Gospel showed new hearts in that they did little acts of kindness for these newcomers.

In the evening they were invited into our living room with its open fireplace and hard earth floor. Avoiding the chairs, they sat on grass mats spread there for them. The little portable organ was opened and, helped by our house boys, we sang the two first simple Gospel songs for them, which were "Come to Jesus Just Now" and "Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus." Our interesting little guests joined right in the rythm with bobbing of heads and swaying bodies, in interpretation of the music. Then they arose to examine the organ, without touching it. Open mouths covered by cupped hands gave ample evidence of minds that marvelled. It was almost too much for them, so they filed out onto the porch and could be heard far into the night expostulating one to another in excited undertones regarding the strange instrument and the singing performance of the evening. Just at the break of day, we were awakened by much coughing and throat clearing at our window. This was the black man's way of knocking on the door. Rising, we learned that they were about to leave but would return soon, bringing others with hunting nets, spears

and dogs, for a stay of a few days on the Mission station. They wished to hunt in the surrounding area and bring in wild meat for us all to eat. Our cook, Mubuga, was called, who gave them a quantity of salt in exchange for the Pygmies' gifts of the day before. Sev-

eral pieces of pink perfumed soap and some safety pins were thrown in extra. A very cordial invitation was given them to return soon and a promise was made that special camp huts would be built for them near our shelter, and that these would be ready for them upon



Depinga with his Ketsi before conversion

their return. Then they left silently, but in happy spirits. Sunday School picture rolls had held their interested attention that evening, and the simple Gospel songs and story seemed already to have gained a little entrance into their hearts.



Pygmy grandmother and grandchild with their good friend, Mrs. Fairley

Within a hundred yards of our house the surrounding forest stood unbroken, except for paths leading to the tribes and to the Pygmies south of us. Here, at one side, a little knoll was cleared of its underbrush and, between tall overshadowing trees, two bark-and-leaf camp shelters were prepared for the Pygmies' return. Our Mission village, growing in a valley below, was made up of representatives from all the larger tribes who were helping in building up the station and daily receiving Gospel instruction. At this early time, these people took a keen interest in encouraging the little folk to make camp with us, not only, it is true, in order to learn God's Word, but also because of their stock in trade—meat—which is the African's "must" luxury. They most willingly constructed the long, low camp huts for the Pygmy hunters, and sent a runner twenty-five miles to call them when the place was ready. Early one morning a few days later, chatter and laughter were heard in the direction of the south path, toward our Pygmy camp. When we went to investigate, we found about fifteen muscular little men, carrying coils of hunting nets slung over their shoulders, their spears in hand, with three sleepy-eyed, faded tan dogs tugging on leashes. These were the equatorial African variety of dogs which never bark. They wore the usual wooden, bell-like rattles hung about their scrawny necks, the rattles being temporarily silenced by green leaves stuffed in around the clappers. The leaves are removed at the moment the dogs are released in the hunt. The courageous little fellows have a keen sense of smell and, as they trail the prey through the thick undergrowth, their trotting pace causes these "artificial barks" to make quite a noise, which startles the

game into flight, thus trapping them in the surrounding hidden nets.

Depinga and Mbimba were back again and they introduced the master hunter, Siombo, who, they said, was always placed in charge of their troop because



Siombo, master hunter

of his wide knowledge of the forest and its game trails. "His good judgment, helped by strong fetishes, made possible the capture of much game," we were assured. After typical hand-thumb shaking and greetings from all, quite a collection of eggs of very doubtful freshness were presented to us. Immediately and with a burst of self-importance (very amusing because of their

child-like picturesqueness), our little spokesman aired a number of urgent demands. They were very hungry, they said, showing the extreme looseness of the cords around their waists, which supported their loin cloths. Would we give them several bunches of plantains to roast and a pot of palm oil and salt to eat with them? Someone added that a good bunch of ripe bananas would be very acceptable! Another, seeing a workman pass by with a five-gallon tin full of water, suggested that they greatly needed one, too, for the same purpose—which, indeed, we knew would be an innovation for them! An axe was requested with which to chop firewood, and also a half-dozen large, sharp bush knives for making their beds of green

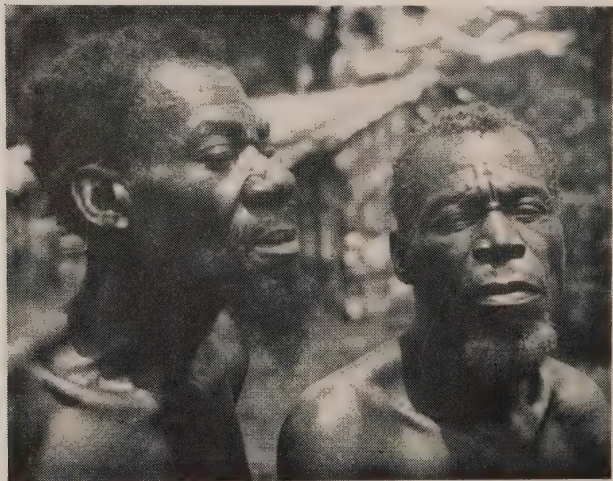
poles, raised above the damp earth floors. And, of course, drying racks to be made and strung above the fires, were needed right away to keep their hunting nets tough and strong. These would also be used later for smoking meat to be stored. "How stupid," they loudly scolded, with a twinkle in their eyes, "for those that built the houses not to have completely furnished them too!" Food and tools were brought to the camp and, before all could be equally served, the fragrant bananas had been eargerly snatched by a



A good bunch of ripe bananas

few and swallowed in delight. The others joined in a chorus of voices calling for more.

The nets were tossed from their shoulders to the ground in a circle and each one dropped on his coil of resilient cords in a reclining position, while two young men were sent to gather wood and build a fire in the open center. Before long a cloud of smoke rose and a lively fire was in progress. Each joined in peeling their large, green, banana-like plantains and in roasting them in the hot coals. While eating, they frequently dipped this tasty food into the palm oil and salt.



"The hunting charms," the old men said, "are ill disposed."

There would be no hunt that day for several reasons. Their feet were tired, they explained, and their hunger was not yet satisfied; poles had to be cut for bed making; and, besides, we had not all sat down yet and had a good long talk about "Mambu ma Nz-

embi," the things of God. Too, "the hunting charms," an older man said, "will be much more in readiness for action in a couple of days!" "They are ill disposed just now!" he added. Later on, in the morning, ringing bush knives and chopping axes indicated that the Babongo were at work furnishing their new hunting camp. In the afternoon they wandered about the station, visiting the various activities in progress on the compound. They were non-communicative and very timid, but their curiosity impelled them to explore the marvels of these white "Bata ba Nzembi" (people of God). Our light skins seemed to embarrass them, but the long straight hair of Mrs. Fairley and our daughter amused the little men greatly, as did the fact that husband and wife and brother and sister ate together at the same time. Our mosquito net-covered beds with brightly colored spreads awed them.

A string of fresh fish had been brought from the river nearby, which seemed to excite the ravenous appetites of the Pygmies. They eyed them and handled them with naive expressions of desire to have them to eat. When given their portion, they tripped off gaily to roast them rolled in green leaves and covered with live coals. Some yams soon joined the fish in the fire to send up a pleasant aroma.

As dusk fell, torches of bark-wrapped pitch were brought forth and lighted. These were stuck upright in the ground and gave a flickering red and yellow light, while their fragrant sooty smoke floated in the air. All were in gay spirits when Mrs. Fairley and I joined them for our promised talk about the things of God, followed by a chat with them regarding the things of Pygmyland. Our still very limited knowledge of the language used, produced periods of pro-

found attention which was broken now and then by peals of good-natured laughter. A lively effort was being made by our young language teacher to interpret to them our attempt to express in words God's



God is hunting for His Babongo. Depinga responds to His call

love for all the children of His creation. "We bring you the good news of Jesus, the Son of God, sent from heaven to all tribes of people," we told them. "God is hunting for His Babongo, lost and in slavery

in a dark, spiritual jungle, because of separation from Him through sin. His Son Jesus Christ came, and died for us all as individuals and has become our Redeemer, Guide, and gracious Master. 'For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Everyone who answers his call, 'Come unto Me' Jesus will receive into His great tribe of Christians and will lead them in a happy, new, eternal life with Him."

The torches were sputtering and going out as we stood to go when Depinga had ended a hunting tale in which all had joined. Our flashlight was lit, to the amazement of our audience, and as we made our way to our house, many feet could be heard following on the path, as questioning eyes watched the bright gleam whipping along the ground ahead of us.

The following night rain fell, followed by a clear day. All was in readiness for a hunt. The men with



The hunt provided meat for all

their dogs, nets, spears, bows and arrows, were chatting by the fire as they waited for the sun to dry the jungle foliage, thus protecting their highly prized nets from weakening because of dampness. Siombo, leader of the hunt, informed us that the wary antelope and other animals were still alert, walking about eating, but in mid-morning they would enter the thickets to lie down and doze through the hot, sultry noon hours. Only then is it possible to surround them stealthily for the catch with a circle of strongly supported nets!

Being their "ketsi," I was urged to join them in the hunt, but other duties prevented my going at this time. However, accompanying them on numerous subsequent hunts, we were enabled of God to become very intimate with these little folk, and in a heart-thrilling way, a number of them were won for "Kumu Jesus," the Chief Jesus.

The hunt continued daily for about a week, providing an abundant supply of gazelle, porcupine, and antelope meat for all. Evening Gospel story-telling and talks with the hunters were the high points of the day. Growing restless because of this long "appearance" in public, our little friends announced their departure, explaining that they were too few in number to continue the hunt as efficiently as they should. They would go and bring more of their comrades and additional nets, one of which would be for their "ketsi" to use. Our parting gift in exchange for the wild meat and (discarded) eggs was in the form of bright new machettes and handfuls of rock salt to take to their wives and children. Joy was very apparent as they disappeared into the shadowy forest in single file, nets over their shoulders and spears in hand.



Our jungle encircled Mission center is host to a band of Pygmies

CHAPTER IV

Hunting in Pygmy Haunts

Several weeks passed by without word from our little friends of the forest. Then one day a group, including many new faces, appeared at our Pygmy camp. Again there were gifts for us and also for several of the Christians on the station. These included bundles of leaf-wrapped tsege, a turpentine-flavored wild fruit which we had learned to like very much. This time there were hunting nets for all, and one especially for "ketsi." In the early afternoon we put on strong khakis, and, shouldering a 410-gauge repeating shotgun, joined the hunters, but to our surprise consternation marked their faces. They were not at all pleased with the gun. I must not take it! They did not like the noisy gun, the very presence of which would frighten away the animals! Then, to shoot at game which is being chased from hiding and closely pursued by Pygmies through dense jungle vegetation, was simply too fearful for thought. Deeply chagrined because of my ignorance, I sent the gun back to the house, and shouldered a net and a spear. We moved off silently into an almost invisible trail through the tall trees and underbrush. Some little distance in, where the path forked, a bunch of fresh green leaves was seen lying in one of the two paths, put there by an advance hunter to direct us. With a glance at them, Siombo took the other direction and soon we met the scout who had gone ahead to locate the animals. Silently we followed, bending low under the tangled overhead vegetation, and at times crawling

on hands and knees on the game trail. Try as I would, I was unable to be agile and quiet like my very scantily clad little companions. My clothes were continually caught and snagged by the underbrush, causing the rustling of leaves. My hat was continually knocked off. Slippery wet leaves, logs, great roots underneath and steep grades made progress awkward, and the breathing of the damp hot air was fatiguing.

Fresh tracks of hoofed animals were now numerous. Stopping under a giant tree in deep shadows, the leader planned the first setting of the nets for the day's hunt. A



**Ketsi and Pygmy couple catch
two "mouse deer"**

keen young man was sent in a roundabout way to determine whether the antelope had settled down to rest for the noon hour or were still continuing further on. Returning, we were assured that there were no new footprints beyond the nearby thicket just upwind from us. In a low voice, Siombo chose several men to be the "bush beaters" and the

rest, including myself, to be the "strickers of the meat." Then, working to the left and to the right, a narrow passage was cut with sharp knives. Two nets, joined and fastened upright on a series of saplings, were pinned to the ground with sticks. The other

nets were added on each lengthening wing, until the thicket was nearly encircled. The work went forward with remarkable speed and quietness.

Soon, clear birdcalls were heard from two directions some distance away, which my companion said were the Pygmies speaking to each other in order to find one another in the undergrowth, and thus close the final gap. The completion was announced by a



Carrying nets, big knives and spears, we moved off
silently into the forest

chorus of "bird talk." Then silence reigned for a time as the small group of "bush beaters" took their place inside the nets. Each of the others hid himself also inside the nets at vantage points equally spaced around the almost hidden ring.

I was carefully placed between gnarled tree trunks, and, like the others, spear in readiness, I had my portion of the net to guard and make the kill should chance send an animal plummeting my way. Again more birdcalls were heard, this time running from man to man entirely around the ring. Then a blood-curdling burst of shouts, chest slapping, and bush beating broke forth from the little group on the far side. The noise served the double purpose of startling the prey into blind flight and of exciting the dogs into pursuit. Like a bullet, an antelope shot out from hiding a short distance away and struck the net with such force that the cords broke and the horned flash of white-striped beauty made an escape. The din of noise continued and in another moment the dogs, with wooden rattles sounding, broke through behind another fleet animal, but this time one to be counted among those held in the entangling nets and to be killed by an expertly thrown spear.

At the end of about twenty minutes, it was apparent that no more living creatures remained within the enclosed area. Soon a number of Pygmies appeared near us with several gazelles and an antelope; the heads of the animals all tightly bound with green leaves and vines from the forest. Inquiring the reason for this, we were told that in this way the antelope could not see what was in progress, and also that birds could not see that they were dead and carry the news to the still free animals in the surrounding

area where the hunt would continue. The same procedure of setting and re-setting of nets around thickets continued throughout the day.

On one occasion, while seated under a great forest tree waiting for the Pygmies to complete the encirclement, I faintly heard tapping sounds as coming from the trunk of the tree. These grew louder and louder, and after two or three minutes the trunk seemed fairly to rattle. Looking around and up for the cause, a large group of monkeys was seen to approach the tree and silently pass on as they travelled away from the presence of the Pygmy hunters. This jungle telephone apparently was created by the branches of all the trees being held closely in contact one with the other by the mass of intertwining vines. Sound was conducted through the wood over a long distance and down the tree to my ear. One would naturally think the jungle to be perfectly silent in the breathless heat of noonday. Yet nature, of which plant life was a large part, was actually noisy. Periodically, almost rhythmically, branches and even trunks of dead trees fell with a thud to the ground. Dead portions of trees gave forth the continuous sound of boring beetles and the hiss of millions of termites which were devouring the dead wood. Huge dead leaves detached themselves and floated down to drop with a swish amongst other dried leaves on the forest floor. Ripe fruit dropped from heights of 150 feet through leafy undergrowth to pop open upon striking the ground. Also, high overhead in the burning sun, large bean-like pods burst open with the report of a rifle, and sent, scattering in all directions, large seeds which rattled down, striking trunks as they fell to the earth below. Now and then colorful horned beetles droned in the air as they hovered here and there and passed on. Great clusters

of caterpillars, massed like a carpet on the trunk of a tree, sometimes wove their bodies back and forth, causing a peculiar sound; close at hand, and also in the distance, katydids gave forth in a deafening din of shrill signals as apparently one group on a hillside would answer the call of another across the valley. At this hour, by way of contrast with the insects and plant-life, all bird and animal life was silent.



Pygmies give dowry for a wife, who is "engaged" while very young

As our now weary group of hunters rolled up their nets to return to the mission camp, there was a great deal of joking and light-hearted laughter amongst them. Somebody had seen one of the younger hunters, in his exuberance to make a kill, catch his foot and sprawl headlong into the net with the animal; he was empty handed, his spear sticking in the ground some distance behind.

As we back-trailed single file, the hunter ahead of me stood a moment at the base of a large tree with his ear to the trunk; then, taking his bushknife, made a few nicks in the bark of the tree. As he turned to go on, I inquired of him the reason for doing so. "Oh," he replied, "didn't you hear the bees buzzing inside the tree far up near the top?" His sensitive ears had caught the faint sound of a large cluster of bees with their abundance of honey located at least

a hundred feet above our heads. He intended to return to procure the sweet delicacy.

A day or two later we were again invited to join in a different type of hunt. This time a number of mission axes were requested, for the Pygmies announced that a monkey hunt was to ensue. Again several scouts were sent on, an hour ahead of us. The hunting nets were taken, but the dogs were tied in camp. An hour's journey took us in a general direction upwind. Following signs left in the numerous jungle paths, we finally came upon the scouts who, with many gesticulations, assured us that they had succeeded in treeing a large pack of monkeys in the top of a nearby forest giant which towered above the rest of the trees. They had located this group of monkeys some distance away and, driving them with frightening cries, and striking the trees with clubs as they followed them for several miles, they had caused them to take refuge in this unusually dense vine-covered tree.

Silently, the Pygmies surrounded the tree at a distance of a hundred feet. Then all broke forth at the same time, felling trees with their axes ringing. All surrounding trees were to be cut down, the giant left standing alone with its monkeys! Many of the vines leading up from the lower trees were torn away but a number of larger vines hung straight down the trunk to the ground. These were used later as "ladders" by which the Pygmy hunters would climb up into the treetop to battle with their prey in its own environment. With dexterity the swinging bush-knives soon cleared the ground of fallen branches and trunks, making an open, encircling area. Then the best climbers among the men cut loose from their roots, four

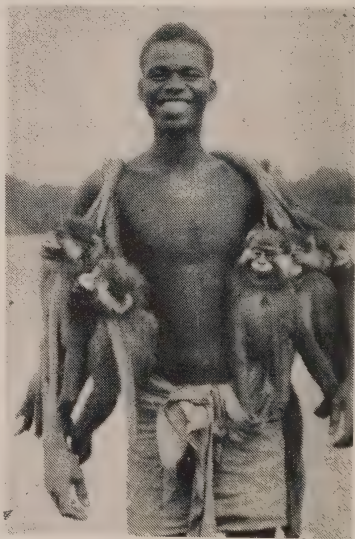
or five of the remaining vines attached to the "monkey tree" and, climbing trees across the gap in the surrounding forest, tied these vines in spider-web fashion to standing trees. These were to be deceptive avenues of escape across the opening for the hiding monkeys. From the middle of these vines, others were attached which hung to the ground. At these places, branches were formed into hideouts where certain Pygmies waited to pull on the vines with a jerk as monkeys attempted to use them to reach the forest beyond.

At this time other Pygmies took their nets and, just within the surrounding forest in the uncut underbrush, hidden from view, they set them up to encircle the monkey tree. Silently, with stout clubs in hand, Pygmy men took their positions around and within the nets, ready for the kill and with hidden men prepared to jerk on the vines, a half-dozen strong young men, with loin cloths tightly bound and each holding a small club by his chin, began to climb the vines up the mighty trunk into the tree-top. Complete silence reigned!

In a few moments the Pygmies were fighting with the monkeys, striking at them, their piercing screams echoing and re-echoing in the forest. The scared and infuriated animals lunged back at the hunters, showing yellow fangs and uttering sharp, staccato howls. Shortly, a number of younger monkeys ran out on the vines, attempting to reach safety. Violent jerks on the vines caused a number of these to lose footing and fall to the ground where they turned and, blindly jumping into the nets, were killed with clubs, to become the most highly prized meat that the jungle affords.

The battle high above continued with noisy ferocity. Some of the larger monkeys ran out with great speed, leaping from overhanging branches in an attempt to span the space between them and the forest. Though a number succeeded, others fell short of the mark and were added to the catch. Baby monkeys were unharmed and later regained their liberty.

While I was at my post guarding a small section of the net, I slowly became conscious of an unusual phenomenon. All about me, crickets, grasshoppers, and insects, including ants and caterpillars, came running and hopping in one direction towards and past me as if they were escaping from some impending doom. They were a nuisance as they crawled over me in their fleeing movement forward, but it



A day's take of monkeys for meat

was not long before the cause was made known. Millions of carnivorous driver ants had spread out, covering every square inch of the forest's lower vegetation in their hunt for insect meat. Now it was the turn of the white man and several of the native hunters to take flight to an area out of the course of the ants' progress.

This type of hunt was strenuous for the little men of the forest and was not repeated again the same day, but we returned home happily with a number of fat monkeys swinging from the shoulders of the hunters. A slit in the skin along the tip of the tail was slipped over the dead monkeys' heads, thus forming a handbag-like handle with which to carry them.

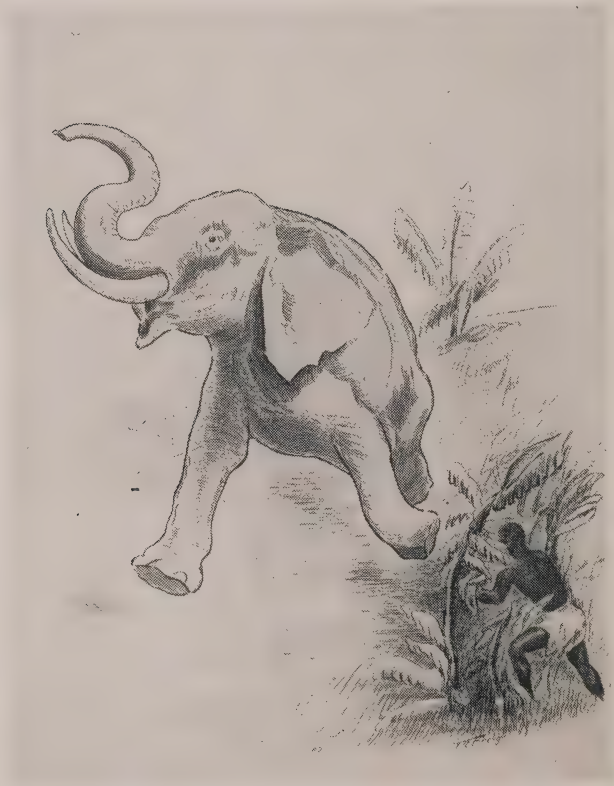


A monkey being singed before roasting

CHAPTER V

Mighty Elephants and Midget Men

From time to time, elephants passed near the mission station in their cross-country migrations and at these times the Pygmies were much excited and de-



A lone bull elephant was in the neighborhood

sired to take their "ketsi" hunting—this time with his gun. One evening two of the Pygmies came running in to announce that a great lone bull elephant was in the neighborhood, destroying plantations. As yet, not having obtained a permit to shoot elephants, we invited our missionary companion to go along with his gun. My motion picture camera accompanied me.

In the night the elephant had travelled a long distance, and it was not until that evening, after having covered nearly twenty five miles, that we discovered his fresh tracks. About twenty of the expectant little men of the forest accompanied us and carried our folding cots and food boxes. Far from any native village, night fell upon us in the forest. Under the shelter of a towering tropical tree, the little folks soon constructed leafy shelters to protect us from the dripping vegetation caused by the condensation of a heavy fog. Firewood was gathered in abundance, and preparation made to roast a couple of porcupines, taken from a hollow log during the day. As we opened tins for our own lunch and boiled water for drinking, it was interesting to watch the preparation made by the Pygmies for their evening meal. After searing off the quills on the porcupines and drawing them, the skin of the fat little animals was scraped and then the carcass placed on a little rack made of green poles, above the fire, where an attendant barbecued them thoroughly. The tips of rattan vines, resembling asparagus, were rolled in leaves and placed in coals to cook beside turnip-like tubers which had been collected at the trail side during our day's trek. To these were added bundles of begonia leaves, including their pink and yellow flowers. As the cooking proceeded and these were raked from the coals, the

orange fruit of the oil palm replaced them in the fire.

While we were enjoying bowls of hot Campbell's soup, our little friends, with their fingers as their only tableware, laughingly partook of their food, each article receiving what seemed to us a generous amount of rock salt that our cook had brought along. Peals of laughter and much gaiety followed their meal, and, as we gathered around the fire, the tropical night suddenly closed in upon us. Two or three of the men brought forth leafy bags which emitted a continuous buzzing sound. One, however, was silent. A smooth flat stone had been brought from a nearby stream and was now heating in the fire. Soon one of the younger men, with apparent anticipation of some further delicacy, carefully opened the leaves and, reaching in, brought forth a handful of large beetles, intent upon taking flight. Quickly their legs and wings were removed, and they were laid upon the hot stone to roast, much in the manner in which we would prepare chestnuts, and a nut-like fragrance arose as they cooked. Many hands reached out to be served, and it was evident that this delicacy would be much enjoyed. Other packages were opened, and the silent one proved to contain large larvae, apparently the young of these beetles. These, too, were roasted, being principally of fatty white flesh.

My hospitable little friends naturally handed me several hot insects from off the fire and, by cracking and chewing some with delight, assured me that they were wonderful. Mustering courage, I ate one and was surprised to find it both fragrant and tasty, with something of the flavor of a well roasted peanut. My throat, however, was trained in western ideas and it was very difficult to swallow the horny parts of the

beetle. So, with a yawn, and stretching my hands far over my back, I tossed the remaining "bugs" unseen into the shadows. With the fire glowing red and each one now quiet and meditative, I opened the store in my heart of Bible stories and brought forth by the Spirit's direction something appropriate for drawing men into the net of Salvation of the loving Lord Jesus.

My companions began to prepare for the night by building several fires around the base of the big tree. From the lower trunk, the tree had fin-like roots extending far out and into the ground, which supported it in times of tropical storms. Between these there were deep wedge-shaped spaces, and into these the little men began to place themselves, with their backs resting against the tree and their feet stretched towards the circle of fires. Spears stood upright in the ground nearby. In this way they were remarkably protected from the numerous prowlers of the night; and, though in a semi-upright position with one resting against the other, they soon fell into sound sleep. When the fires burned low, the men nearest replenished them with wood.

At the break of day, scouts were sent out to locate the elephant. As the sun arose one of them came running in, having taken a shortcut. Following, we soon came upon the fresh trail of what was obviously a giant among the elephants. The Pygmies explained that this lone animal had been driven by younger male elephants from the leadership of a large herd in the area, and now roamed the forest trails alone, an outlaw. His tusks were so heavy and long that here and there we saw marks where they had dug into the ground.



At the break of day scouts were sent out

During the course of the day, dozens of palm trees were pushed down and crushed by him for food, the hearts, tasting like cabbage, eaten out of them. Here and there he had loitered under the trees to eat great quantities of a strongly-perfumed fruit. Sauntering along at an easy gait, the animal scarcely made a sound, and, though we overtook him several times, we were unable, due to the insufficient light, to make pictures of him. Towards evening, having scented us, the elephant crossed and re-crossed a large river and was lost to further pursuit.

Later, in another part of the country in which we opened a new mission station, there was need of meat for the rations of our Preparatory Bible School students. As there were many elephants in the area, and having procured a permit to hunt them, I invited a Pygmy, Ganza, to be my gun-bearer and guide, in an attempt to obtain one of the great beasts. A local native volunteered to show the way, taking us late in the afternoon to distant plantations where elephants were expected to be found that evening.

Upon arriving there, it was discovered that the herd had turned in another direction. Clouds were forming, and a drenching tropical downpour was imminent. It was much too far to return to camp that evening, so our Pygmy friend suggested that we press farther into the unbroken forest in an attempt to spend the night in a Pygmy camp.

Darkness fell as we came upon several dilapidated and deserted huts. No preparation had been made to spend the night in the forest, and we were somewhat concerned not to find fire, which is indispensable not only for comfort in the damp chill air, but is necessary for protection from myriads of mosquitoes and biting insects. Also, much faith is put in it as pro-

tection from the numerous large panthers prowling at night. We must admit that we were somewhat discomfited as we found the dusty floor of the little camp populated with fleas.

One of the men started off alone, feeling his way along almost imperceptible paths in an effort to reach a Pygmy encampment where a firebrand could be procured. Our guide quickly brought armfuls of large leaves from the forest, which were made into a mattress upon the floor. With a partly-burned log from the fireplace for a pillow, my bed was ready for the night. Exhausted from our fast walk, we attempted to sleep, but the mosquitoes were very bad. The termites, devouring the bark walls of our hut, periodically made their loud, swishing noise. The downpour of rain trickled in a stream along the floor through the leafy bed, and as the wind arose a mournful sound was caused by branches of trees rubbing over our heads. I had discovered through conversation with our guide that we were now within an extensive virgin forest in which there was a large population of Pygmies, and there in the darkness, the love of God for them filled my heart with special prayer that His Son would direct our mission in Gabon, so that many of them would be brought into the great family of God.

About midnight, still not asleep, we saw a flickering light appear outside, and in another moment the little bark door was drawn open and Ganza entered with another unusually light-skinned Pygmy carrying a most welcome firebrand. Greetings were brought from the distant Pygmy camp, and word that some of them had seen a small search party, with my camp cook, on one of the forest trails. They had been taken into a Pygmy camp and would reach us in the morning

with the white man's food and change of clothing. With a good fire burning, I was able to close my eyes against the smoke and passed the rest of the night in comparative comfort.

It was early in the morning that Mubuga, our tried and true native helper, anxiety written upon his face, reached us and asked earnestly about my health. Shortly he had hot pancakes and wild honey with sliced fresh pineapple set before me. With renewed strength, the course of the day's hunt was set.



Mubuga, our tried and true helper and cook

The elephants for which we had come were by now far from reach, but Ganza's new Pygmy friend assured us that before the day was spent they would be able to bring us into contact with the game. A definite course was set so that by evening we would again be back near certain villages in the country inhabited by the big tribespeople. The little search party then returned, and with the able Pygmies I continued the elephant hunt.

Along the way, before a warm trail was found, Ganza had told all that he could remember of what he had learned about the Great Chief Jesus who had taken away his old life and given him a new one. He was filled with joy and a desire to have our fresh and able companion know his own newly-

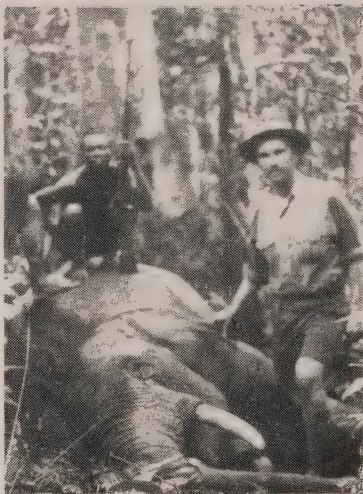
found Redeemer and Father God. With incredulous eyes and questioning lips, the little guide asked if Ganza could bring us back to them again, sometime, that they too might hear and join the new tribe of "Nyambi" God.

In the forenoon a likely trail was struck under a group of tsege trees, where a quantity of this prized fruit of turpentine flavor had been eaten by the elephants. Some of the fruit was gathered and prepared for us over a little fire. Thus refreshed, we continued on our way. Soon we were not far from the giant beasts, and the guide quickened his pace. Just then I was experiencing something new. All over my body tiny baby ticks were crawling and beginning to imbed themselves deeply in my flesh. The Pygmies, too, were rubbing their skin with their hands, and they informed me that these were coming from the elephants ahead which were covered with the parent ticks. Brushing against trees and logs on the trail which had become infested with the insects we naturally became the new hosts of the pests.

Sounds could be heard in the distance, and sharp reports like firecrackers echoed through the trees. We could see that the elephants were breaking down smaller trees and eating the tender leaves from their tops. Being very careful of the direction of the wind, we changed our course, attempting to get ahead of the animals, all the time checking the exuberance of our little guides who were very much unaffected by the excitement that I was feeling as we approached the massive pachyderms. The forest trees towered overhead; festoons of vines swung from their branches; plants and ferns were in abundance, and the moving herd was hid from view. The naturally quiet

tread of the elephants was made even less audible by the decaying vegetation and humus on the forest floor.

Abruptly Ganza stood erect before me and pointed, repeating in a whisper, "Nzogo, nzogo!" I was unable to discern the form of an elephant, but in a moment a big grey head advanced from behind a tree, and with upraised trunk and slowly flapping ears, the beast, apparently scenting us, was attempting to learn our location. There was no time to move. In a standing position I shot, making it's beady eye the target a hundred yards away. To my amazement, and with little sound, the elephant dropped. The stampeding herd, as



Ganza, holding my gun, perches triumphantly upon the dead "nzogo"

is their custom, charged upwind away from us, and there before us lay over a ton of meat for the young Bible students of the mission. The shot had struck its mark and reached the brain. Leaving our catch behind, our guide took special note of the position of the animal, marking the bark of several trees and continuing to do so as he led us on towards our appointed camping place with the big people. First our course passed through several Pygmy camps. Here we met more little people who had never seen a white man. They were shy in the extreme, but at-

tempted quite successfully to be friendly, taking my hands in theirs and swaying back and forth in a little dance-like curtsy. Their recently made camps consisted of egg-shaped shelters made of long, slender poles, each end of which was stuck into the ground and over which large leaves were loosely arranged. In one of these camps, special shelters were seen,



Mubuga slices steaks from the elephant's trunk

built high in the branches of the trees, with swinging ladders dangling from them. These, they told us, were their retreats when the elephants and panthers endangered them.

We nibbled portions of roasted food offered us, and enjoyed bites from wild honey combs. Most of the food was extremely bitter and fibrous, but we found a remarkably healthy, clean skinned people with numerous women and children, possessing well fed bodies. To me, they seemed happy and peaceful, and their recently made camps and the many deserted ones along the way gave proof that their nomadic, open-air life with only the most meager protection afforded by their shelters, accounted for their preservation and vitality.



Ivory tusks are the
hunter's prize

Before going into camp, I attempted to remove as many as I could of the still unattached ticks by bathing and soaking my clothes in a river. As we reached camp, we learned that word had preceded us of the success of the hunt, and a runner had already been sent to the mission for everyone to come with huge baskets for the meat. Arriving in high spirits from the station, known as Yileka, the newcomers

followed the guides back to the elephant, where the immense bones were stripped of all meat which, with quantities of fat, was gathered in loads to be carried

on backs and shoulders. Laden to the utmost, our people were unable to bring in all the meat, and a generous portion was given to the villagers who had followed along with them. The hunter prize of two nice ivory tusks was brought to me, along with a choice piece of the elephant's trunk for my evening meal. Having satisfied themselves with freshly cooked meat, the larger part of the flesh was smoked, thus preserving it for future use by the school boys.

CHAPTER VI

Hospitality in Tiny Huts

In response to many invitations from Pygmyland to visit several semi-permanent villages located about thirty-five miles distant, Mrs. Fairley and I, with the children, organized a visit by caravan. Toward the close of the second day's trek through the jungle, at a point where a small path joined the larger one, a crowd of our little friends appeared and surrounded our sedan chairs and carriers. Cheering us in welcome, they persuaded our big men to allow them to carry us into their village about a mile farther on. The little men, only four or five feet tall, though very courageous, soon began to stagger under the load. In spite of many attempts to help one another, they abruptly sank to the ground. The regular boys, dubious about the outcome, were close at hand and soon had the chairs high on their shoulders. Accompanied by chanting little men, they brought us safely into the village. The narrow street was filled



Mupiololo, a Pygmy child

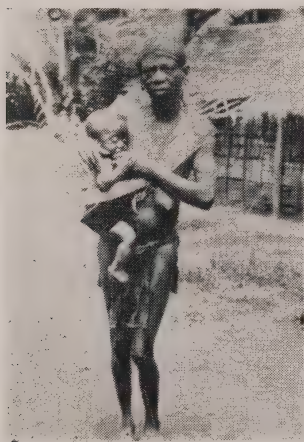
with little women and older men, one of whom, named Nzamba, proudly pointed out three tiny bark huts in which we were to distribute our family to spend the night. The doors being too small, portions of bark were quickly removed from the walls to enlarge them. By eliminating an inside partition we were able to set up the cots. The children's beds were placed in tiny lean-tos.

The overjoyed villagers crowded in about us, watching every movement, touching and examining our hands and clothing. Before we were finally settled in our lilliputian quarters, various individuals and

groups brought gifts of chickens, eggs, freshly killed meat, and leafy packages of honey.

On the equator night falls in a few moments after the sun sets. Tired after our long day's journey, we attempted to excuse ourselves from an evening visit which we knew would continue far into the night. Other plans, however, had definitely been made for us.

As we sat at the camp table, eating our meal,



Pygmy mother, her baby held in an antelope skin sling

the crowd of scantily clad little folks pressed in about us, watching every move and imitating our apparently strange custom of eating with forks and spoons.

The mission boys had gathered for evening worship, and gospel songs and testimonies were soon holding the attention of the people. Joining them, our

hearts were thrilled to note their child-like attention and interest in the story of God's marvelous love in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of all mankind. Their lips and voices followed the songs, and soon numbers more joined those who had learned the songs at the mission. The volume of voices rose and echoed back from the surrounding wall of forest.

We then prepared to withdraw, but it was evident that something still further was afoot. Mrs. Fairley and the children retired, as I remonstrated with the natives to be quiet in order that we might go to sleep. As I talked, however, a number of flaming torches appeared along the path, these being carried by Pygmies from surrounding camps. I could now see that Depinga had brought a large fetish dance drum into the open, and everyone was gathering to join him. Being shocked to think that a dance was about to be enacted, I called for one of the Christian men accompanying us to act as interpreter in order to make it clear to them that we, the people of God, would be greatly displeased at such a demonstration. My interpreter, however, informed me that this was to be a special dance of welcome to their "ketsi," his "woman," and their children. Still we were very reticent about acknowledging this difference, for as far as we could see a fetish dance was to ensue.

In a few moments the big tom-tom resounded with rhythmic beat, and all joined in dancing in a circle, bowing and gesticulating in our direction. Although we were touched at this gesture, we felt somewhat chagrined as the drone of voices, and the throb of drums continued far into the moonlit night.

Early the next morning, a little group of our Christian men opened the day with worshipful song

and zealous testimony. Clear teaching from the Gospel was given with unusual wisdom and discernment. They brought out forcefully through use of the Word that, although we greatly appreciated their welcome, they must learn to worship the God of Heaven in a way pleasing to Him, and thus please us, His servants. They were assured that we understood the sentiment expressed, but that the use of customs long practiced by them in the worship of the spirits of the dead and the appeasing of the spirits of evil were displeasing to us.



Descending from our road chairs (foreground), a picture is taken in front of the Pygmy church

Before our arrival, a very simple church structure had been built in imitation of the one seen at the mission. We were to hold our Bible teaching classes and gospel services in the shade of this shelter. Although it was far too small, crowds gathered around the open

walls and intently listened to messages from us and our helpers.

From time to time groups of other Pygmies came to greet us and to spend time seated near us. Like the others, they showed much curiosity towards the white mother and her three children. Always gifts were brought and invitations extended to continue further on the path and visit their village camps. We found the Pygmies' sincerity and simple life most interesting.

As we stood up to go on our way, the little men again insisted upon carrying us to the next encampment. Unlike their first attempt, they had chosen their strongest hunters, and by frequently changing off they successfully and proudly brought us safely into the center of the next Pygmy village.

Five different groups were visited during the ensuing days. Special effort was made to provide larger shelters for us. Always much attention was given by them to assure us that each of their gifts brought for our comfort contained no poison. The sections of bamboo filled with our water were always tasted in our presence and bits of the food offered, eaten. The smiling drinker and taster would smack his lips to prove that all was delicious.



River inhabited by hippopotomuses

CHAPTER VII

Pygmy Hunters Captured for Christ

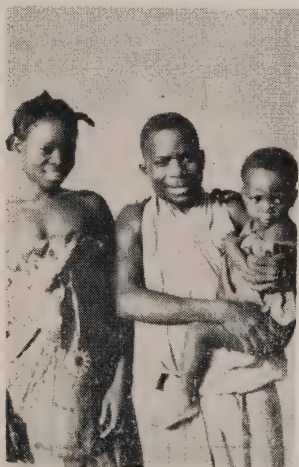
The many times of opening God's written Word in teaching the Pygmies, while living intimately with them and joining with them in their forest activities, began to bear fruit. Former ignorance, fears, and taboos were broken. One afternoon the hunters came into the mission station a little early. One of their number, Mbimba, had been seriously wounded by the horns and hoofs of a large antelope. He was a man who, through our efforts, had been released from slavery. His face was deeply scarred with pock marks, but clear brown eyes had recently smiled his appreciation of the Gospel story of Jesus' love. Half walking and half carried, he was brought to me. Quickly the box of First Aid bandages and a disinfectant were opened and, with the aid of Mrs. Fairley, ugly gashes in his abdomen and chest were drawn together with adhesive tape and bandaged. Having lost much blood, Mbimba was very faint, and, as he lay upon his mat with Pygmy companions all around, we prayed simply and directly to the Lord Jesus to make the way of salvation clear to his heart and to provide healing for his body.

Looking up, Mbimba said that he already knew that Jesus had forgiven him his sins and that he knew, when we prayed, that our new Chief in heaven would hear us! In a remarkably short time Mbimba recovered, and his sweet testimony was given as he took our hands in his and, with a singing voice, said that Jesus was like honey in his mouth, satisfying his life within.

Then, one by one, several of the men publicly testified to the entrance of the light of God's Word into their hearts, and expressed their desire for pardon. These were the men who had constructed the simple gospel chapel in their village. They now requested a full-time evangelist and his wife to instruct them daily while in their forest wanderings. At the following general gathering at the Station, this request was made public by their spokesman. Among the younger evangelists, a member of the big Banjavis tribe, a fine energetic Christian worker, Pandi Binombo, volunteered. At first his young wife hesitated, but soon she joined him in unity of purpose. Her hesitation was due to the fact that never before had any of the larger tribespeople been servant to the Pygmies, who are considered a slave and subject people. In their testimony they said that the Lord Jesus left His perfect home to come to us and live in our miserable sinful world, and thus they, too, wished to live in dependance upon Him among these poor and unpredictable little people for whom also Christ died.

This remarkable act of consecration was much blessed of the Lord in those early days, and Pandi and his wife learned to live from hand to mouth, God's hand to their mouths, eating many strange foods and meat offered them by those in their charge. After a period of service by them, other young couples ministered to the Pygmies, and the Word of God slowly but surely found root in the hearts of men and women. This ministry of the big people to the little people was an outstanding fruit of the work of God's grace in the hearts of the Gabon converts. Unsaved members of their families and tribes bitterly scoffed at them for becoming "slaves" of the Babongo!

The irregular life and the spasmodic, nomadic wanderings of these little forest folk off into remote areas of the jungle for a seasonal hunt, broke deeply into the continuity of their evangelist's teaching program, often making much repetition necessary and causing a great deal of wasted time and energy. The care-free little people were very slow to assume the responsibility of supplying the need of their devoted evangelist and his family. They were in the habit of suffering hunger for long periods of time, and then living for days gorging themselves upon meat and wild foods. In the opinion of their teacher, raised in a rich farming region where, regularly, domestic meat was available, this was discouraging to even the staunchest heart. The African wife feels the responsibility of supplying food for the family, and thus she was often deeply tried and found it necessary to make



The Pygmies' evangelists and their wives are members of a "big" tribe

long trips back to her home country to bring heavy baskets laden with sweet potatoes, cassava root, and dried fish.

Other discouragements in working with the Pygmies were numerous. Often when the entire Christian community gathered at the mission station for periods of Bible study, baptisms, and communion, they found that the Pygmies were unmoveably occupied in the course of a seasonal hunt. The evangelist and his wife would attend alone. At the consummation of the services, the Pygmies would arrive in high spirits—much too late to share the spiritual fellowship of the other African brethren. On these occasions the missionaries and Christian workers present did their utmost to have special daily evangelistic meetings with them for an added period, and God continually worked in their hearts.

The little band, which was principally composed of men in the early days, gradually included more and more women and children. The first census made of the numerical relation of men to women in the tribe revealed that there were four men for each Pygmy woman, due to the fact that the women were taken by coercion to be the wives of the men of the big tribes. During the few years following, however, the government agents, recognizing our unique work among these little people, backed in a practical way our efforts. Many of these women and girls were freed from slavery and became the wives of the little bachelors. A number of the masters were loathe to grant freedom to these women, so our only course of help was through prayer offered to the "Chief" (Jesus). By practicing much patience and by the telling of the Good News of Salvation, numbers were freed with a minimum of difficulty.

The special meeting on the station, for our aforementioned oft-belated visitors was provided for by placing the responsibility on a capable native worker. Daily there was Bible memorization, as well as singing, the learning of Gospel songs, prayer, and testimony meetings. Native brethren with special love, and led by the Holy Spirit, were called to take part, as were the missionaries, in this teaching ministry. The day would open with prayer and a Scripture lesson. The Pygmy converts took a serious interest in these meetings and, though very timid by nature when in the presence of other people, they found real liberty in testimony and prayer.



Special meetings for our little visitors, seen here upon their arrival, were held

The first thing in the morning they dedicated the day's hunt to their Lord, and its catch to the furtherance of His work on the mission station. Shouldering their nets and spears, they went forth to their danger-

ous task full of courage and anticipation. Often, as they entered the forest in single file, the humming and singing of Gospel songs could be heard. At the close of the rigorous activities of the day, they would rest for a while before preparing their evening meal. With their spirits revived, they were ready for a full hour of inspirational messages from the Bible, with singing and instruction, the meeting being held around their blazing campfire. These meetings were often such an inspiration that, quietly, many of the bigger people joined the outer circle in order to share in the blessing received from God.

As time passed, numbers confessed the Lord Jesus and publicly burned their former gods, consisting of charms and fetishes, made principally from skulls,



Youthful Pygmy inquirers

horns, and parts of wild animals and dogs. Prayer requests were borne by all, and frank confession of temptation and sometimes backsliding was brought forth in the warmth of the fellowship in Christ.

Satan's power, manifest in many subtle ways, was broken, and wayward hearts were brought again under the control of the Lord. Prayer for the sick and for protection from the dangers of the forest resulted in a remarkable supernatural working of God.

At first, only men took audible part in the meeting, but the time came when the Spirit of the Lord gave courage to the little women to stand and give utterance

to His saving, keeping power, and also to take part in public prayer. The ancient native custom permitted only men to speak in public gatherings, and it took some time for the new converts to become sufficiently spiritually minded to allow the women believers to participate. At the time of their first attempts to witness publicly, it often took many moments of controversy in order to show them that, in Christ, both men and women have equal rights in publicly testifying of their Saviour. Those present who were still carnally minded, did not hesitate to attempt to scold and discourage the women believers in taking part. But the time came when perfect silence reigned as these little sisters in Christ poured forth their hearts before them all.

With heads bowed and, sometimes, hands raised toward heaven, they would pray: "Father God, I thank Thee for Jesus, my Redeemer, who has delivered me from slavery to my former master of sin and fear. I desire with singleness of heart to crown Thee Chief of all my life. I thank Thee for a night of undisturbed rest from all evil. Formerly our thoughts were held in torment of witches and omens of impending dangers. Be our Guide, leading us along the pathway in which You would have us walk today. As we hunt animals for the Christians here in Bible School, protect us from danger. Oh, Great Chief, make the light of Thy love to enter into the hearts of our Pygmy people everywhere. Help us to be true to Thee in all things which Thy messengers from the foreign land, and also our evangelists, tell us, out of the Writings of God. And may they grow very old amongst us. Thus may it be. In the name of our Lord Jesus."

The time came when the elders of the church, and the missionaries, felt that the testimony of the first

believers made them ready for public baptism. Mbimba, who testified to Jesus' redeeming life at the time he came wounded from the hunt, was the first to be baptized. Then Siombo, the chief hunter, followed in public testimony of dying with Christ and rising in newness of life in Him. Others have followed.



**Beaming-faced little forest folk came
unannounced for a visit**

The Pygmies' arrival and departure from the mission station was as sudden and unannounced as our tropical storms. We could be seated at our early morning breakfast when both front and back screen doors would open without forewarning. There, anywhere from a few to a hundred beaming-faced little friends, new and old, would crowd in and seat themselves closely about us, their bodies packed together in every available space. Our chairs were carefully

avoided by all but their leader, Siombo, who enjoyed placing himself in kingly fashion in the largest, softest chair available.

As we continued our meal, we would chat with them all, giving and receiving greetings. Then, just as quickly, all would arise and silently file out of the house, going to their camp on the mission compound. The chiefs and leaders among them always



A leafy package of wild honey, presented at the kitchen door, is tasted publicly as proof that it is not poisoned

remained behind, near the kitchen door, until we finished our meal, when they would make presentation of their gifts. A chat with them would follow, and a suggested program for their comfort, hunting plans, and Bible instruction would be arranged.

One evening, just before the retiral hour, a small band of recently converted believers came to our door, and by their serious faces and demeanor we detected that something unusual was about to be revealed. The leader, Mboko Siangu (meaning "the right arm"), broke forth in rapid speech, calling to one of the men to place a raffia-covered bundle at our feet. This bundle, he said, had just been wrested from the house of a witch doctor whom they had bound hand and foot. It developed that these little people, assured of the keeping power of Christ, had challenged their local witch doctor in his evil deeds. One of their number, a young Pygmy woman, had been taken forcibly from camp by the master of her

aunt who had died in slavery. She was to replace her aunt as his slave without any marriage arrangement whatsoever. This was native custom, but the girl, wishing to exert her right of freedom, had run away from his home to Pygmyland. Her irate master had



Mboko Siangu, right, with
Chief Nzamba

called the witch doctor to capture her and "treat" her so that she would never run away again. The terrorized girl was taken to her master's house where, during the witch doctor's fetish ceremony, she was bound to the ground and cut on her breast with razor-like knives, after which "magic" medicine was rubbed into the wounds. In a few moments, she staggered

around, then falling, she died.

These believers, remonstrating against the whole procedure, were infuriated, having learned at the mission that the poison used by them to paralyze and kill animals was, without a doubt, being used by the witch doctor. It was this and not the witch doctor's supernatural powers which caused the suffering and death of those who dared to oppose him. So, that afternoon, when the witch doctor had entered his home, they too made their entrance. Pouncing upon him and binding him firmly with freshly cut vines

from the forest, they poured into his ears the truth from God's Word. They then gathered together his bag of charms and brought them to the mission station. This was the bundle at our feet.

For a moment this story almost stunned us, for we knew that never before had the authority of these practitioners of demonology been challenged. Realizing that only God had given them this courage, we encouraged them in His Name, as some of the men were naturally fearful of what might be taking place in the hut where the wicked medicine-man killer lay bound. The Christian workers were called and prayer was made that the Lord's will in this matter be revealed to us, and that all glory received through it should belong to Him.

Under a light, I opened the bundle and found it full of the supposedly magic charms with which, it was believed, the owner controlled the very life and death of mankind. Birds' heads, chickens' claws, skulls, and vertebrae of snakes and lizards, horns from animals, parts of the human skull, human hair, finger nail cuttings, dried parts of human organs, leaves and bark, fruits of trees, and a quantity of nameless dirty objects made up its contents. But, in the very center of this conglomeration, a tightly bound packet of seeds was discovered—strophanthus seeds, from which a well known heart stimulant is made. When introduced into the blood stream, however, it causes sudden, violent death.

The Pygmies immediately recognized this and were exuberant in the realization that they had correctly analyzed the witch doctor's cruel act. In the providence of God, the high French official of our region made his overnight stop near the mission station that evening. It was decided to go with the Pygmies and

make a report to him. Being a man sincerely interested in the welfare of his subjects, this gentleman looked into the matter very thoroughly. He was grateful to see the Pygmies for the first time, and was pleased to learn of this remarkable incident—the fruit of the Pygmies' new faith. The potent seeds were sent by swift runner to a renowned botanist working in the area. Shortly, confirmation of their being those of the strophanthus vine was received. Soldiers were sent to arrest the evil witch doctor, who was known to the government as a source of much unrest and many killings in his community. Word was sent from this fine officer to the mission Pygmies, commending them for their courage and public spirit.

The new life of victory through practicing the teachings of the Bible brought the believing Pygmies into a new position and relationship amongst the other people. Happy equality in the experiences of the Christian walk made them a very real and practical part of the Church of Christ in southern Gabon.

However, in a number of ways they have characteristics quite different from the others. In times of instruction and periods of visit to the mission station, they quickly reach the saturation point of concentration and learning and, feeling the call of the great forest, they retire into its fastnesses for periods of obscurity before returning, fresh and hungry of mind and body, for others periods of fellowship, work, and teaching. Though several of the men have joined the Preparatory Bible School and have been taken under the missionaries' special care, so far none of them have been able to control their restless spirits longer than a few days or short weeks before succumbing to the call of the jungle home.



Preparatory Bible School, where Pygmies joined periodically in study

Recently, in order to teach these little people to read God's great Guide Book, the Bible, reading charts employing the rapid Laubach System are being used. It is believed that this method will be quite effective. Picture charts are used to depict native life, in teaching the alphabetical sounds. They readily understand and remember Bible stories and parables, taught by pencil drawings employing jet figures to depict the subject matter. However, the stories often become distorted as a result of their active imaginations. It is believed, though, that the teaching of the young men to read Bible translations will alone become the stabilizing factor in deepening their experience of Christian life.

From among those giving testimony, we mention the following: Mboko Siangu, leader in the witch doctor incident, was energetic in public testimony. A middle aged Pygmy woman, the first to receive baptism, was Ngumba (meaning "porcupine"). Manifest in her life one of the fruits of the indwelling spirit



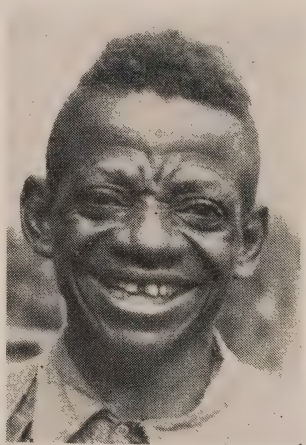
Fetish tom-tom, discarded
by Pygmies

of Christ was, that, though a widow, she prepared and provided by her ingenuity and industry, much of the food brought to her resident Christian teachers and their wives. When the evangelist had to be away from the little parsonage and church, she it was who occupied the house and supervised Christian worship; and, upon his return, he and his wife would find the grounds carefully weeded and swept, everything in order, and a joyful welcome awaiting them. When examined by the church elders and mini-

sters, she sat before them with her eyes upon the ground. Quite acceptable was her knowledge of Scripture and her clear understanding of her Lord's work of redemption and transformation in her life. She manifested a prayerful spirit in her zeal to serve her Lord in numerous ways. As she prayed, the

Spirit of Christ witnessed in all our hearts that this, indeed, was a child of His, a sister in the household of faith.

Then there is Depinga, who, with Mbimba, was the first to welcome Mrs. Fairley and me upon our arrival together in Gabon. His growth in faith and understanding of spiritual things has been steady and remarkable throughout the years. Little by little his spiritual leadership was accepted by the growing band of believers. At the time of his public testimony, when he confessed Christ as his Saviour, he brought, as did others of his village at the same time, his sacred charms and fetishes to be burned. The large tom-tom, previously mentioned, was included among them. Upon it was carved the supposed likeness of Buiti, the great evil spirit. As these emblems of their former darkness and bondage to truly satanic beliefs were being tossed into a bonfire, and testimony was given to the



Recent picture of
Depinga Daniel, leader among
Christian Pygmies

Light received in Christ Jesus, dispelling their fears, we suggested two or three articles be withheld from the blazing fire and given to us to take back to the Christians in America as tokens of the Pygmies' turning from dumb gods of wood to the true and living God, the Creator of all things. Thus today among our curios, the Pygmy fetish drum is being seen by

many who are interested in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ in far corners of the earth.

The above story is a summary of our local experiences, and is only related in the hope of adding something to the knowledge of and prayerful interest in a small but very interesting branch of God's great family tree. The necessity of making contact and keeping continually in touch with these naturally secretive and distrustful people in order to evangelize them, brought about the purposeful, careful cultivation of their natural activity, the hunt. A place was thus created for their contribution to the new Christian community and training center into which they fitted well.

This Gabon Pygmy Church is only a nucleus of what can become a jungle-wide Christian work. These strange little people, part of the "every kindred and tongue and people and nation" of Revelation 5, are scattered over thousands of miles of equatorial Africa. They are very much in the background of native society, yet as we learned to know them, we found nothing in them that was fundamentally different from you and me. The same Gospel in its fullness is readily grasped by them and, acted upon, brings into being new creatures in Christ. The methods of evangelism now employed to reach the "big" tribes of the Dark Continent are not entirely adapted to their needs. It would seem that the approach should be through the loving, patient ministry of Spirit-filled native workers. Our observations have convinced us that there is a great danger of the white missionaries utterly spoiling the possibility of a truly spiritual work of God in their lives by acquiescing to their natural and, in some areas, artificially stimulated desire for the "matabisu," or ma-

terial gift. In our experience this was early seen and checked, as it was plain that the Enemy of their souls would use this characteristic to thwart a real work of Grace. These men and women were always required to earn by the hunt, or pay for by exchange, every article received. They are masters of the art of barter, and employ many "pressure" means to force, if possible, an exchange which in the end amounts to a gift. By patient, straight-forward, business-like understanding with them—value for value—through a period of more than ten years the author was able by prayerful watchfulness to put and keep material relationships in the background and to make the attaining of Christ and His kingdom the wonderful objective.

The real problem in recent times is to get them to become Bible reading followers of the Lord Jesus, well-fed children of our God. Prayer for, and interest on behalf of, the world's dwellers in jungle shadows everywhere is an urgent call of God for our day. "And he (Jesus) said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature'." Mark 16:15.

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Fetish Dancing Mask